

SECTION 7.33.(b) It is the intent of the General Assembly that three cooperative innovative high school programs are established that emphasize the educational development of high school students in the areas of science and mathematics in a nonresidential setting. One of these programs shall be located in the eastern region of the State, one shall be located in the central region of the State, and one shall be located in the western region of the State. The State Board of Education shall begin planning for the design and implementation of these programs and shall report their plan to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee and the Fiscal Research Division of the General Assembly by March 15, 2006.

The plan shall include, but not be limited to, the following aspects of the proposed programs:

- (1) Programmatic design including location, curriculum, student access, and calendar.
- (2) Projected costs of operation, including instructional, administrative, transportation, capital, and other costs.
- (3) Any plans for coordination with institutes of higher education.
- (4) Proposed implementation schedule.

MINIMIZE TIME DEVOTED TO STANDARDIZED TESTS

SECTION 7.37. G.S. 115C-174.12(a) reads as rewritten:

"(a) The State Board of Education shall establish policies and guidelines necessary for minimizing the time students spend taking tests administered through State and local testing programs, for minimizing the frequency of field testing at any one school, and for otherwise carrying out the provisions of this Article. These policies and guidelines shall include the following:

- (1) Schools shall devote no more than two days of instructional time per year to the taking of practice tests that do not have the primary purpose of assessing current student learning;
- (2) Students in a school shall not be subject to field tests or national tests during the two-week period preceding the administration of end-of-grade tests, end-of-course tests, or the school's regularly scheduled final exams; and
- (3) No school shall participate in more than two field tests at any one grade level during a school year unless that school volunteers, through a vote of its school improvement team, to participate in an expanded number of field tests.

These policies shall reflect standard testing practices to insure reliability and validity of the sample testing. The results of the field tests shall be used in the final design of each test. The State Board of Education's policies regarding the testing of children with disabilities shall (i) provide broad accommodations and alternate methods of assessment that are consistent with a child's individualized education program and section 504 (29 U.S.C. § 794) plans, (ii) prohibit the use of statewide tests as the sole determinant of decisions about a child's graduation or promotion, and (iii) provide parents with information about the Statewide Testing Program and options for students with disabilities. The State Board shall report its proposed policies and proposed changes in policies to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee prior to adoption.

The State Board of Education may appoint an Advisory Council on Testing to assist in carrying out its responsibilities under this Article."